

Geography in schools: changing practice

The report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of geography in primary and secondary schools. At a time when geographical issues constantly make the headlines, there is some evidence of decline in provision in schools. This report shows the characteristics of good geography and fieldwork, and suggests what needs to be done to make the subject more relevant and enjoyable in all schools.

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Executive summary

This report draws on evidence from Ofsted's school inspections from 2004 to 2005 and on specific surveys of geography conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Additional Inspectors between 2004 and 2007 in primary and secondary schools. Survey work in schools focused, in particular, on the impact of fieldwork on provision in geography, the monitoring of the pilot GCSE and teaching about the global dimension.¹

Recent annual subject reports by Ofsted have highlighted weaknesses in geography in primary and secondary schools and have provided some evidence of decline in the overall quality of provision.² In primary schools, this is associated with teachers' weak knowledge of geography, their lack of confidence to teach it and insufficient training to support them. In secondary schools, the number of pupils opting to study the subject beyond Key Stage 3 continues to fall. In part, this reflects the increased range of subjects available, both academic and vocational, but it also reflects pupils' dissatisfaction with a geography curriculum which they perceive as irrelevant. In many secondary schools, a narrow range of textbooks and a focus on factual recall rather than on exploring ideas fail to capture pupils' interest.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and subject associations recognise that geography is at a key point in its development. The White Paper *14–19 education and skills* singled out the subject at Key Stage 3 as in need of a radical change of direction. It recognised the need to reform the curriculum and to 'develop better guidance and training for geography teachers'.³ The need to revitalise geography is reflected in the recent review of the curriculum and in the launch by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) of the Action Plan for Geography, which grew from consultations and discussions with teachers, schools and the wider geography community.

As well as identifying the reasons for the current position of geography in primary and secondary schools, the report describes good practice which, if adopted more widely, could help to reverse the trend. It includes the work of some of the schools involved with the subject associations and the Action Plan for Geography; their descriptions and evaluations, focusing on the value and importance of fieldwork, provide a series of cameos entitled 'Our geography'.

¹ The pilot GCSE has been developed as an outcome of a QCA geography and history development project. This hybrid geography GCSE was intended to ensure geography's relevance and dynamism in the curriculum. It has an emphasis on relevant geography for 21st century citizens and is managed by the Oxford, Cambridge and RCA examinations board. For further information visit www.qca.org.uk/geography/innovating/14-19/.

² See the 2003/04 subject reports on the Annual Report 2003/04 microsite: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/annualreport0304/.

³ *14–19 education and skills*, White Paper (Cm 6476), HMSO, 2005; available from www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills/.

Part B of the report examines the new pilot GCSE course; the potential of fieldwork to engage and motivate pupils to study geography further; and the extent to which the global dimension of geography receives the attention it deserves.

Key findings

- In primary schools in 2004/5, pupils' achievement and the quality of provision were weaker than in most other subjects.⁴ Geography survey inspections conducted between 2005 and 2007 continue to show that many primary teachers are still not confident in teaching geography and have little or no opportunity to improve their knowledge of how to teach it.
- The quality of much teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 continues to be mediocre, often because secondary schools focus resources and expertise on examination classes, assigning non-specialists to teach at Key Stage 3. The Secondary National Strategy has had only a limited impact on improving geography teaching.
- The leadership and management of geography were weaker than for all other subjects in primary and secondary schools in 2004/05 and weaknesses continue to be apparent. However, in those primary schools where geography is well managed, the subject thrives and contributes positively to the Every Child Matters outcomes.
- The quality of assessment in primary and secondary schools is generally weak. Assessment focuses insufficiently on giving constructive feedback to pupils about their geographical knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Although pupils achieve high standards in GCSE and A-level geography, there is a significant decline in the number of pupils studying at these levels.
- The gender gap, which was previously narrow compared with that in most other subjects, is now becoming visible. Girls outperform boys at Key Stages 3 and 4, although more boys than girls choose to study geography.
- Evidence from schools involved in the new pilot GCSE suggests that pupils value the relevance of their work and the links between citizenship and geography.
- The majority of the primary and secondary schools in the survey did not recognise the value of fieldwork sufficiently and did not fulfil the requirement to provide it. Concerns about health and safety, curriculum time, expertise and budgets reduced the amount and effectiveness of fieldwork. Yet it motivates pupils and enhances their interest in geography, as reflected in the better take-up of geography at Key Stage 4 in schools with a good programme of fieldwork.
- The global dimension remains underdeveloped in the majority of schools surveyed. Frequently, insufficient connections are made between the wider

⁴ This is based on data from whole-school inspections in 2004/05, the last year for which such comparisons can be made.

curriculum and the geography curriculum to reinforce pupils' understanding of issues such as global citizenship, diversity, human rights and sustainable development.

Recommendations

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the QCA should:

- continue to provide financial support for the Action Plan for Geography to ensure support for developing the subject.

Local authorities should:

- encourage the development of networks of schools in order to share and develop good practice in geography.

Schools should:

- evaluate provision for geography against the findings of this report in order to identify and tackle aspects requiring improvement
- recognise the value of fieldwork for improving standards and achievement in geography and how it can support many of the aspirations in the *Learning outside the classroom manifesto*.⁵

Part A. The state of geography in schools

Introduction

Listen to a news broadcast or open a newspaper and you cannot fail to be struck by the relevance of geography. This practical discipline enables us to understand change, conflict and key issues which impact on our lives today and which will affect our futures tomorrow. The floods in Cornwall and the destructive power of hurricanes in the Caribbean have highlighted changing climatic patterns and global warming. The devastation by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the world's reaction has further demonstrated the power of geography. Equally, war and conflict in the Middle East, water shortages, famine, migrations of peoples, disputes over oil, the complexities of world trade, interdependence, globalisation and debt are all major issues with which our world is grappling. All this is the geography of today and, in order to understand the intricacy of it, it is important that pupils learn about the world they live in and on which they depend. It is important that the citizens of tomorrow understand the

⁵ *Learning outside the classroom manifesto* (DfES-04232-2006), DfES, 2006. This 'sets out a vision to enable every young person to experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of their learning and personal development'. For further information visit www.teachernet.gov.uk/learningoutsidetheclassroom.

management of risk, appreciate diversity, are aware of environmental issues, promote sustainability and respect human rights and social inclusion. If the aspiration of schools is to create pupils who are active and well rounded citizens, there is no more relevant subject than geography.⁶

1. It is widely recognised that geography in schools is at a crucial point in its development. The White Paper *14–19 education and skills* singled out geography at Key Stage 3 as in need of a radical change of direction; it recognised the need to reform the curriculum and to ‘develop better guidance and training for geography teachers’.⁷ This was reflected in the launch in 2006, by the then DfES, of the Action Plan for Geography, the outcome of consultations and discussions with teachers, schools and the wider geography community.⁸ The DCSF is funding the Action Plan for Geography from 2006–08 to support an extensive programme of activity and professional development in primary and secondary schools. The wider programme of 11–19 reform, including the recent review of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, also provides an opportunity to shape and re-energise geography.

The study of geography stimulates an interest in and a sense of wonder about places. It helps young people make sense of a complex and dynamically changing world. It explains where places are, how places and landscapes are formed, how people and their environment interact, and how a diverse range of economies, societies and their environments are interconnected. It builds on pupils’ own experiences to investigate places at all scales from the personal to the global.⁹

Geography in primary schools: the forgotten subject?

Achievement and standards

2. In 2004/05, the last year for which national data are available, pupils’ achievement in geography was good in only 40% of primary schools, and very good or excellent in only 6%.¹⁰ In half the schools it was satisfactory, but this was below the average for most other subjects. Survey inspections of geography conducted between 2005 and 2007 continue to reflect these data.

⁶ David Bell, ‘The value and importance of geography’, in *Teaching Geography*, Spring 2005.

⁷ *14–19 education and skills*, White Paper (Cm 6476), HMSO, 2005; available from www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills/.

⁸ In 2005 the Geography Focus Group was set up ‘to develop a strategic approach to the challenges facing geography in schools, including addressing weaknesses in teaching at primary level and Key Stage 3 identified by Ofsted, and boosting GCSE and A-level numbers’. Its work led to the Action Plan for Geography. The Plan’s website is www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/ and it has an introduction: www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/what-is-geography/about-the-action-plan-for-geography/.

⁹ *Geography: programme of study for key stage 3 and attainment target*. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007, p101; available from <https://orderline.qca.org.uk/PdfDownload.asp?title=1847215351>.

¹⁰ Since September 2005, school inspections do not report on individual subjects. The academic year 2004/05 is, therefore, the last for which national data are available.

3. Achievement was slightly better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. Achievement in Year 6 is often very limited and pupils in many schools study little geography until the statutory tests have finished.

'Our geography'. Eastchurch Church of England Primary School, Isle of Sheppey: making good progress in geography

Our school has 300 pupils. It has a strong environmental ethos and is currently applying for its permanent green flag as an Eco-School. Each class regularly takes part in fieldwork within walking distance of the school. The school's current policy is also to provide at least one experience of fieldwork for all pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 in the wider community, in partnership with Groundwork and The Children's Fund.

One project involved all classes investigating different aspects of their neighbourhood. A community artist was later engaged to work with the pupils in producing stained glass windows, celebrating and valuing aspects of the landscape and community. The range of work reflected the variety of local landscape and settlement, including villages, a town, seaside resorts, marshland, farmland, docks, heavy and light industries, a harbour and nationally important bird reserves.

Fieldwork is integrated with other work, especially literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). It begins with assessing pupils' prior knowledge and interests and is directed by their own questions and risk assessment. It is planned to involve the community and engage pupils in local issues where possible. Fieldwork in the wider locality takes place over a whole school day. Tasks are designed to collect and use data back in the classroom.

Recent fieldwork in Year 4 took place on the theme of 'our neighbourhood'. We identified areas that the majority of the pupils needed to work on, based on previous work, and set out two targets drawn from aspects of the National Curriculum level descriptors. The work took place over a three-week period, including a whole day's fieldwork. We designed a fieldwork booklet with space for pupils' own risk assessment, questions, initial concept maps and targets. The pupils' self-reviews were very useful and showed that they were very aware of their own performance in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Many of the pupils lacked confidence in using maps at the start of the project. As part of the preparation for the field trip, pupils had used aerial photographs and maps of different scales to locate places and plan routes. On the day of the field trip, pupils were asked to find themselves on map extracts at a series of different locations. They found that being able to compare the maps with the real environment helped to make sense of the task and their skills increased considerably. Some became quite critical of their performance and their

subsequent self-assessment showed that they still thought there was room for improvement.

4. In the minority of schools where geography is flourishing, pupils develop their knowledge and skills progressively, as in this example.

In this first school, experiences in the Reception class encourage and sharpen children's observational skills. The teachers use stories, outdoor activities and role play to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world. In Key Stage 1, pupils continue to develop the skills of observation and enquiry through the many opportunities to learn outside the classroom. By the end of the key stage, pupils know the countries of the UK, the location of their home town, sea/land and hot/cold regions and can identify them on world maps. They use photographs showing different environments and seasons and can describe differences between their location and contrasting locations.

5. Young pupils who make good progress in developing a sense of place are able to talk about the main features of their local environment such as the supermarket and the park and recall the order in which they see them on their route to school. They can express opinions about the quality of their environment: for example, pupils commented on the rubbish in the local river and ways in which this can be harmful. They also understand the language of direction and develop a sense of measurement by taking a number of steps in a particular direction.

6. Good progress in Key Stage 1 often results from focusing on observation and recording, especially in fieldwork. As a result, pupils are able to describe and explain features accurately. The focus on enquiry and the use of key questions also helps to develop their geographical understanding.

Key Stage 1 pupils can describe the differences between human and physical features and provide examples. They can also complete simple maps in plan view to locate features, for example, on a caravan site. They are beginning to write for an audience and use persuasive approaches. A holiday brochure they had produced included many aspects of geography to explain why people should visit. Pupils could describe in simple geographical terms the places they had visited and compare them. Many were beginning to develop and use a wide range of geographical vocabulary such as cliff, beach, boundary, country and capital.

7. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils who have had good experiences of geography display higher level skills, including reasoning. For example, they can compare and explain the differences between the environmental quality of their local high street and a contrasting area. They have good knowledge of geography. For example, they can recognise and name the Arctic and Antarctic Circles and the Equator; on a world map, they can point to the area of the Asian tsunami and the

affected countries. Higher attaining pupils in such schools can describe in simple terms physical processes, such as plates causing earthquakes. Their skills in using an atlas are well developed. They use coordinates with confidence, compare maps of different ages and describe the differences clearly. They recognise symbols to help identify the function of places and can plan routes using the atlas and textual information.

'Our geography'. The Haven Voluntary Aided Church of England Methodist Primary School, East Sussex: making a positive contribution

Our school occupies a new building on the new Sovereign Harbour development in Eastbourne. There are 160 pupils at the school, which also has a unit for pupils with speech and language difficulties. The fieldwork for the Year 3 class was linked to the QCA unit, 'How can we improve the area we can see from our window?' On one of the last remaining pieces of undeveloped land on the harbour development, there are plans to build a giant superstore. The intention was to start the pupils thinking beyond the view from their window and to understand the impact developments can have on the environment and the local community.

Before embarking on the fieldwork, it was essential that the pupils had the necessary geographical knowledge and skills. They spent some time discussing and finding out about map symbols, and learning to read simple maps. This enabled them to find and plot the route of their walk on a map of the local area. The pupils also learned the difference between human and physical features so they could use correct terminology when talking about the features they could see. This enhanced their learning and moved them on from simple to more complex language: for example, from 'I like the trees' to 'the natural environment is more pleasing to look at'.

Going out into the field enabled the pupils to gain a real sense of place. The pupils completed simple maps of the route, recorded the different types of land use, and took digital photographs of the walk. They stopped at intervals along the route to discuss the different aspects of the harbour development as a whole. This led to some very passionate discussions about the effectiveness of seasonal car parks, which in winter contain nothing more than abandoned shopping trolleys and broken beer bottles. At the site the pupils conducted a traffic survey in order to assess the impact on the local road network and they were able to see the site for themselves, and develop a greater appreciation of the impact that any development would have. By using role play and 'hot seating', pupils explored different ways of thinking about the proposals. Interviewing each other at the site provided valuable materials for discussion afterwards.

On returning to the classroom, the class took part in a 'public enquiry' activity. This involved the pupils discussing a question about the harbour development. They worked in groups to explore a range of viewpoints and identify with viewpoints different from their own. The experience from the fieldwork enabled them to draw their own conclusions and articulate their thoughts. Whatever the outcome of the development project, the pupils have had their say in determining the future of their landscape. Their strong feelings can provide the basis for letters expressing their views to the local newspaper and the local council – a real example of 'active citizenship'.

Teaching geography

8. The latest set of comprehensive national data (2004/05) showed little outstanding teaching: although over two fifths of teaching was judged to be good, the largest category was satisfactory. In terms of the quality of teaching, geography was the weakest subject overall.

9. Recent survey inspections (2005/07) reflect these data. Most of the teaching seen showed that teachers had good generic teaching skills, for example using focused questions or supporting individual pupils effectively. However, some of the tasks they set lacked challenge, such as repeating work on four-figure coordinates rather than moving on to six figures, or asking pupils to colour in rather than devise a map key. These lost opportunities indicated weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge. In particular, over-direction limited the development of pupils' geographical enquiry skills.

10. An essential starting point for good geography teaching is a sound knowledge base and an understanding of what pupils should know about geography. Good geography teachers, for example, ensure that pupils recognise a map of the British Isles and understand the differences between Great Britain; the United Kingdom; and England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They know pupils' common misconceptions, such as the assumption that a capital city is the biggest in the country, and tackle them. The following example of lively teaching to develop pupils' knowledge comes from a Year 1 class:

During the starter activity the pupils were involved with an interactive map on the whiteboard to help them recognise and name continents. They then played a game using inflatable globes and had to name the continents and countries they touched.

11. Schools where geography is flourishing provide rich contexts for pupils to develop their writing. In one primary school, Year 5 pupils based their writing on photographs of the locality; they were encouraged to concentrate on geographical vocabulary to describe places:

On one side of the river there is a flat flood plain, which is good for growing crops, as when the river floods it deposits rich silt which covers

the flood plain and makes it good for growing crops as silt is packed with minerals. On the other side of the river a steep side of the valley towers above the flood plain. It's filled with vegetation, the soil is less fertile and it is hard to grow crops on it, the trees are natural growing and have been undisturbed for years.

12. In another school, over several literacy and geography lessons, a teacher drew upon pupils' experience of fieldwork to develop their speaking and listening and comparative writing skills. Pupils discussed two contrasting villages in the Yorkshire Dales and, finally, were asked to develop a balanced argument in writing, using the question: 'Is Burnsall or Linton a better attraction for tourists?'

The teacher took every opportunity to improve the quality of the writing. For example, she challenged the class for writing 'Linton and Burnsall are small villages in the Yorkshire Dales'; pupils responded that the word 'small' was 'boring' – alternatives were suggested and 'small' was replaced with 'quaint'. The sentence was further improved to read 'Linton and Burnsall are quaint villages which are situated in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales'. Pupils worked collaboratively to improve their original paragraphs, supported by their own reminiscences and experiences during the visits to the two localities. The writing which resulted was of a high standard and brought the places to life. One pupil wrote, 'Linton offers several village tourist attractions such as the village green and the Fountain Inn. The village green is a relaxing place for elderly retired people to enjoy a picnic whilst watching the world go by. Nevertheless it is also perfect for a family day out ...'

13. Some teachers have recognised the potential of ICT for geography but, in many schools, lack of specialist knowledge and awareness of the range of resources available means that little progress has been made in this area. Although pupils enjoy using ICT, too often the work involves no more than mundane searches of the Internet with little thinking about the geography. Good use is made of ICT when teachers understand how to use the Internet for research and appreciate the possibilities of using computers to generate maps from aerial photographs, build up three-dimensional structures of towns, draw maps with symbols, and construct a variety of graphs to illustrate survey results. The following exemplifies this:

ICT resources are used widely to stimulate interest in different places, both local and distant. Pupils have opportunities to use ICT to present their geography work to others, for example their investigations about Saint Lucia using PowerPoint presentations. In undertaking research, they learn how to refine their web searching skills. They also use data loggers to record levels of noise pollution as part of their fieldwork investigations.

14. Assessment is a particularly weak aspect of teaching and 'assessment for learning' methods, as yet, have had little impact. Although the marking of pupils' work is important in raising expectations, too often work is not properly marked or

the comments on it do not relate enough to the geographical content. The best marking identifies strengths and what needs to be done next, as well as showing some evidence of the work being marked with the pupil present. In a minority of schools, there is no formal assessment of pupils' work in geography.

15. National Curriculum levels provide the benchmarks for assessment, but their use is rarely formal or systematic. Frequently, they are applied differently even within the same school. Schools that have focused on assessment as a lever to improve geography teaching have taken steps to develop their understanding of what the levels mean and how they should be used. Positive developments include standardisation and reference to portfolios of pupils' work to provide exemplification.

16. In assessing pupils' geographical understanding, there is a general tendency in primary schools to focus on geographical vocabulary and skills such as map work, particularly because the outcomes are easier to identify. Geographical understanding is harder to measure and assessment therefore remains underdeveloped. As a result, the analysis of achievement and attainment does not always present a sufficiently accurate picture of what pupils have learnt.

17. These weaknesses underline the case for more and better training. Teachers need a greater awareness of the range of skills used in geographical enquiry and how to weave these into the topic rather than teaching them in isolation, as is often the case, for instance, in the teaching of map work. Integrating such skills into a broader study of a nearby or distant locality can develop understanding and a real feeling of 'a sense of place', as well as building on key concepts such as sustainability, interdependence, development or quality of life.

18. Currently, professional development for primary geography is very patchy. In a very few local authorities it is very good, but in most it is non-existent. Further, it is not a high priority for many schools, so they are reluctant to fund travel and supply cover, even to courses which are free. Attendance at such courses is therefore low. Relatively few teachers attend the annual Geographical Association Conference which provides a very effective way of keeping up to date with current issues in geography.

The geography curriculum

19. The geography curriculum in most primary schools draws strongly from the topics in the QCA's schemes of work: 'Barnaby Bear' and 'Weather and climate' are the most popular units; India, Egypt and Mexico are the most frequently studied countries.

20. This is a sensible approach to meet pupils' needs and interests. However, weak medium- and short-term planning mean that the intentions of these units are not fully borne out in practice, in particular because they have not been adapted, as was intended, to meet local requirements or the resources available. Instead, there is a tendency to rely on commercially produced worksheets which occupy pupils rather than engage their interest, and to 'cherry pick' parts of a study while omitting significant material. Inconsistencies between classes, created when teachers plan

independently, mean that within year groups and across the key stage as a whole pupils receive a disjointed curriculum. They fail to build their geographical knowledge, skills and understanding progressively.

'Our geography'. Shelley Primary School, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex: planning for the future

Our school is an average-sized mixed primary school with 262 pupils. Planning is organised through a connected curriculum. Topic headings are chosen to link with some of the QCA's schemes of work but also, wherever possible, to use relevant and interesting geographical enquiry.

Three Year 5 and 6 classes carried out some work on the future of Broadbridge Heath where the council proposed to build 2,000 houses to the south of the existing village. Children's interest was engaged because the issue related to their immediate locality and the proposals would also have an impact on their lives. Fieldwork was planned to enable the pupils to discuss the village as it exists at the moment and how current issues could improve the planning for the new village in the future.

During the fieldwork, the pupils built up their knowledge and understanding of their local area. Their work included field sketches and 'senses sheets' which enabled them to record their likes and dislikes about the area as it is now and encouraged them to consider how it could be developed. This work engaged and motivated every child.

The fieldwork provided an opportunity to gather information and gain an understanding of the context. Back in the classroom, pupils explored and discussed the impact any development might have on their lives and those of other residents. A diamond ranking activity allowed them to explore their perceived priorities and preferences, as well as those from different members of the community such as an older person, a couple who commute to work in the city or a large family.¹¹ The pupils spent a lot of time discussing the choices that they had made and their place on the 'diamond'.

Annotating a digital photograph of the village allowed the pupils to consider improvements that could be made. Tracing paper laid over the digital photographs enabled the pupils to note changes and improvements to the local area, including traffic calming measures and use of green space. These activities provided them with sufficient detail and understanding of the issues to produce their own plan for the new village.

¹¹ A 'diamond ranking' activity is a way of encouraging pupils to discuss and agree on preferences by organising statements in a diamond pattern.

The work culminated in pupils preparing for an interview with a local parish councillor to discuss the issues and articulate their views. Good preparation enabled them to put across reasoned arguments. They were very interested in a broad and balanced viewpoint and were able to question and, most importantly, listen to the views of the parish councillor, who was keen to know the views of all groups in the community. In an area of very high house prices, the pupils in Year 6 could see how important an area of affordable key worker housing would be in the village. This link to their future became very immediate and important to them.

21. In some schools, the focus on the outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda has been reflected in approaches to geography. While enjoyment and achievement should be at the heart of the subject, it also has a role to play in developing pupils' understanding of staying safe in a variety of outdoor environments, raising their awareness of global issues and interdependence, as well as developing pupils' understanding of the importance of the community and helping to promote their economic well-being.

22. A few schools have recognised the close links between geography and education for sustainable development. In some schools there has been extensive work on global interdependence from a variety of perspectives. By looking at trade in a particular commodity, such as bananas or chocolate, pupils can understand how consumer choices affect individuals and environments around the world and develop an awareness of the complexity of international trade. The idea of 'global footprints' is used effectively in some geography lessons to raise awareness about how people can improve the environment or damage it, allowing pupils to measure their own use of resources and consider the wider implications. Pupils learn that they can influence and change their local environment and influence the global environment for the better.

In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were introduced to the term 'global footprint' through the use of a tray of sand and a shoe. They understood that global means the world and footprint means they leave their mark on something. In a circle, the pupils passed around a globe and thought about something they would like to improve, such as preventing trees being cut down or reducing litter on the local high street. Some pupils had to complete their footprint, describing how they would improve the environment of the picture they were given, some had to describe how they would improve their local area, and others had to draw a picture of something they would change. Pupils shared their ideas and made a collection of footprints, deciding which solutions were reasonable and could happen. Pupils also had to decide who would need to do the changing and what people would need to do to influence change. The messages in the footprints revealed that even these young pupils had an awareness of the relevant issues: for example, 'I would treat the world as a friend and pick up all the litter in the school playground' and 'to make this world a better place... I would

recycle cans and food and lots of things. I want to make things so much better.¹²

23. Successful schools have recognised how such studies can contribute to pupils' understanding of the complexities of the world around them and how to become responsible citizens.

'Our geography'. The Fountains Community Special Schools Federation, Staffordshire: is there anyone out there?

Our school is one of Staffordshire's newly formed federated special schools and is a partnership between two all-age schools located on adjacent sites for pupils with both moderate and severe learning difficulties. The Year 5 pupils have a wide range of learning difficulties. Most are working towards level 1. Many pupils achieving at this level are quite limited in their experience of the wider world and their egocentricity limits their appreciation of how 'their world' has links on a local and global scale. The intention of this fieldwork was to determine how their locality is connected to other people and places.

First, pupils were questioned about their place in the world. They identified the place where they come to school, which is in England, which is part of the United Kingdom (UK), and so on. They located the village on a map and then broadened this until they had found the UK on a world map. Discussion followed about the place of the UK in the world. Pupils also located other countries. They then visited the centre of the local village and looked for links with other countries. Links included produce in the supermarket, restaurants and signs. The pupils photographed these links using a digital camera.

On returning to school, an interactive whiteboard was used and, with support, the pupils inserted digital images in the appropriate places on a world map. Atlases were also needed to support this activity.

As a result of this activity, pupils developed a range of valuable geographical skills. Their knowledge of the wider world was increased and pupils understood that we live in a society that is globally interconnected. They also developed their enquiry skills by learning to look beyond what is immediately obvious. Some pupils did not realise that a Chinese takeaway sold the traditional dishes from another country. Such is our global interconnectedness and the limits of their experience that they simply accepted what was around them. Their curiosity about the world around them was stimulated and this led them to ask more questions in other

¹²This inspection evidence is also quoted in Leszek Iwaskow, HMI, 'Learning to make a difference', *Primary Geographer*, Autumn 2006.

situations. The pupils looked at other everyday items and located their country of origin in an atlas. In so doing, they became very enthusiastic and competitive in finding more global links.

The pupils were naturally curious, although some needed more stimuli than others to generate this curiosity. They were enthusiastic to find out more and began to show some independence in their enquiry skills by asking more questions and examining other items in their everyday life. They developed their mapping skills and showed more competence in this area than previously. The area that needed further development was an understanding of scale. As with many pupils of a similar age, they were unable to imagine the actual size of the world and the distances between places. This remained a difficult concept, even when this was explained in the context of the time taken to travel by plane to that place.

24. In the majority of primary schools, geography is taught discretely but, since the publication of *Excellence and enjoyment*, many schools have experimented with teaching the National Curriculum foundation subjects through topics and themes.¹³ Where the curriculum coverage is carefully mapped to ensure that statutory requirements are met, this approach has many advantages, enabling pupils to make links and supporting the development of key skills.

In one primary school visited, the curriculum was used flexibly and teachers were consulted about whether they wished to change or omit any of the geography units studied in the previous year to make way for themed environmental weeks. Where they did make changes, a curriculum analysis was done against the National Curriculum programme of study to ensure that coverage of all aspects remained and progression and continuity would not be limited.

25. Too often, however, the cross-curricular links are unclear or emphasise one subject at the expense of others; consequently, some of the geographical study becomes superficial. The following example shows how geography can be used as a context but with very little learning of geography.

As part of a themed week, pupils had attended an inter-school Olympics where they competed as and represented an allocated country, Pakistan. During the rest of the week they were involved in activities and lessons linked to Pakistan. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities offered: they designed Asian-style clothes, made carpets using traditional designs and learnt about Muslim weddings, mosaics and mendhi patterns. However, pupils rarely explicitly studied the geography of Pakistan. Only

¹³ *Excellence and enjoyment: a strategy for primary schools* (ISBN 1 84185 993 1), DfES, 2003; available from www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/63553/.

in the Year 3 class was the opportunity taken to integrate the work into their geography topic of 'weather around the world'. Overall, despite studying a country in depth over the week, most pupils learnt very little about its geography.

26. Such approaches help to explain why the breadth of the geography curriculum was very good in only a small minority of primary schools, and why many pupils move to secondary school with a weak basis for progression in geography.

Leadership and management

27. Recent subject monitoring confirms that leadership and management of geography are good in only a minority of primary schools. Particular features of the role of geography coordinators in primary schools include the following:

- Many geography coordinators have significant weaknesses in their subject knowledge.
- Not all of them have formal job descriptions and, often, the role of geography coordinator is not reflected sufficiently in the broader processes of performance management.
- Teachers who show they are competent in leading and managing geography can be quickly 'promoted' to manage a core subject or given other responsibilities.
- Coordinators are often given no management time for monitoring and evaluation, and they rarely observe geography teaching directly.
- Although coordinators may monitor planning for geography, there are usually no criteria to judge its effectiveness.
- Coordinators are unable to judge the effectiveness of provision because too little evidence is collected, including from assessment.

28. Some coordinators have found ways to improve their expertise, such as through the project Valuing Places.¹⁴ The benefits of such involvement can be seen in this example:

Excellent subject-specific training had raised the coordinator's confidence and enthusiasm for geography. Participation had made her aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject in her school and, especially, the need to develop teachers' subject expertise to ensure greater consistency in quality across all classes. Although there was still a great deal to be done, the coordinator had a clear plan of action and, where she had been able to work with individual teachers, there was clear improvement in their confidence and the quality of what pupils were taught.

¹⁴ Valuing Places was a teacher-led, professional development project, funded by the Geographical Association, which sought to improve professional expertise in geography. For further information visit www.geography.org.uk/projects/valuingplaces/.

29. Resources for geography were satisfactory in the majority of schools in the survey and good in just over one third. The range and variety of resources are noticeably greater and more up-to-date where coordinators receive good support through subject associations, the local authority or through local school links, as in this example from a community primary school:

Resources include photo packs, atlases, maps and library boxes. These resources are reviewed annually and improved by new purchases. ICT resources are particularly good and used well for geography. Several classrooms have interactive whiteboards, teachers have laptops and classes have regular access to the ICT suite to support their learning in geography. Teachers use digital photographs taken on fieldwork and prepare multimedia resources to help pupils prepare and test out techniques they would use on fieldwork visits.

Secondary geography: the need for change?

You can travel the seas, poles and deserts, and see nothing. To really understand the world, you need to get under the skin of the people and places. In other words, learn about geography. I can't imagine a subject more relevant in schools. We'd all be lost without it... Geography is the subject which holds the key to our future.¹⁵

Achievement and standards

30. The last available comprehensive national data showed that achievement in geography was good in over half of schools inspected, but there was a lower proportion of very good achievement than in other subjects. Similarly, while most pupils had positive attitudes towards geography, they were less enthusiastic about it than other subjects. Evidence from surveys and inspections of geography (2005/07) shows that this has continued, as shown below.

31. Standards at GCSE and GCE A level have shown continuing improvement. In 2005/06 there was an improvement of two percentage points for pupils attaining GCSE grades A*–C, with 66% attaining these higher grades. However, the gender gap, which was previously narrow compared with most other subjects, is now becoming visible, with girls outperforming boys, although more boys than girls continue to choose the subject (a ratio of 14:11). In 2006, 28% of girls gained A*–A grades compared with 21% of boys. At A level there was a similar improvement of 1.7 percentage points for students attaining grades C and above, with 58.8% of girls gaining a grade B or above compared to 47.2% of boys.

32. Survey evidence suggests that the gender gap is, in part, attributable to boys' poorer attitudes to learning, but there are also problems associated with boys' writing and literacy skills, especially the extended writing required for some

¹⁵ Michael Palin at the launch of the DfES's Action Plan for Geography, March 2006.

assessments. In discussion, boys are frequently able to outline and recall the work covered and speak about the main issues far better than they can record them in writing. In particular, with some notable exceptions, boys' coursework is of a poorer quality than girls. They are especially poorer than girls at articulating explanations and developing reasoned argument in writing. Frequently, boys will spend more time on describing processes and graphing and mapping data but they appear less interested in interpreting and analysing this in depth. This often inhibits them from attaining the higher levels.

Teaching geography

No one should consider geography boring – it is one of the most dynamic and exciting subjects pupils can study today.¹⁶

33. The quality of teaching and learning in geography in survey schools was generally satisfactory, often good, but rarely outstanding. Limitations to the quality of teaching include:

- a focus on content rather than learning
- insufficient development of geographical skills
- insufficient use of maps and fieldwork to progressively build up pupils' skills in data gathering, analysis and interpretation.

34. Although some teachers have gained from using the Secondary National Strategy's methodology, others have adopted a rigid and formulaic three-part lesson which does not allow for spontaneity and creativity. In these situations, in particular, higher attaining pupils have insufficient scope to develop the planning and organisation skills to manage their own learning or to work independently.

35. Some aspects of the Strategy's methodology have been adopted uncritically or misunderstood. It is not uncommon to see pupils at the start of the lesson copying objectives into their books with little thought or care. Not only does this waste time, but what they are copying is often about content rather than what they should know, understand and be able to do as a result of their learning.

36. Some good use has been made of lesson 'starters' to engage pupils' interest and lead into or support the main teaching activity, for example using 'true' or 'false' statements with Year 8 pupils to reinforce knowledge and understanding in preparation for a class debate. However, in too many cases, the starters bear little relevance to the subsequent task, add little to the learning and erode lesson time.

37. The plenary stage of the lesson remains weak in most lessons. It is not uncommon for it to be shortened because of lack of time or used by the teacher

¹⁶ Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, launching the new geography curriculum, 2 February 2007.

merely to summarise the lesson. In the few cases where the plenary stage is effective, useful dialogue and interaction with the pupils occur, so that they can articulate what they have learnt in the lesson and provide some feedback to teachers about the extent to which they have made progress.

38. Teachers who develop creative approaches to learning also help pupils to work collaboratively: pooling ideas, checking theories and working out answers, as in the following three examples:

In a comprehensive school, a group of Year 8 pupils, who had previously visited the Peak District, were taught using a 'mindmovie' strategy. The teacher described a scenario of conflict in a national park. The girls had to complete the scenario in their mind's eye and explain to a partner what had happened and why. Pupils were able to discuss in depth the reasons behind the conflict by sharing their experiences. All girls were attentive and made good progress.

In a girls' college, Year 7 pupils were given a challenging matching exercise on weather symbols to discuss and complete in pairs. They were given a sheet to check their answers themselves. This worked well and pupils were able to collaborate to work out where and why they had gone wrong. Through their discussion, they were able to correct their errors and reach a deeper understanding of different weather types.

A Year 12 class was studying newly industrialised countries for AS level geography. The main activity was to sort statements on cards to create an essay to answer: 'Why is Malaysia classed as a newly industrialised country?' using four headings such as 'Pre-NIC Malaysia'. Students had to consider the implications and evaluate the significance of the information, which they compared and discussed with others. Discussion included the changes that take place in a less economically developed country as it develops into a newly industrialised country, the use of statistical data, and how to prepare a good answer to an essay.

39. In lessons where teachers' questioning skills are of high quality, questions are often well prepared as part of the lesson planning. However, too much oral questioning uses closed questions which require a factual response rather than the development of ideas, as exemplified in this 11–18 community college:

The best teachers were expert at questioning and challenging pupils to think and explain their ideas. The questioning was strong because they adopted a role of 'working out the problem with' rather than 'telling' the pupils. Pupils knew they might be asked directly for their opinion. They listened to others because teachers continually asked them to comment on ideas or develop them further.

40. Good teachers also paid attention to developing basic skills of literacy:

Teaching assistants in a technology college enabled pupils with weaker literacy skills to make good progress. Pupils used laminated 'word mats' to highlight and refer to key words; classrooms had key word displays and worksheets were modified so that pupils themselves could read the content directly.

41. The use of ICT in geography has grown with improvements in teachers' skills, better access to the Internet and high quality software. Digital projectors and interactive whiteboards have added positively to geography teaching in some schools. In particular, the use of geographical information systems is revolutionising and extending pupils' experiences in geography. Visual images from around the world bring immediacy to the learning. Satellite technology can bring landscapes to life. Data can be overlaid and used with interactive maps to interpret patterns and solve problems. Yet, while some schools are using these new opportunities very effectively, others are reluctant to take the risk or do not have the skills or resources to do so.

42. Ofsted has reported previously on the need for more challenge in geography for higher attaining pupils, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4. Too often, teaching is directed at pupils of average ability. Lessons which are highly structured or too teacher-directed limit the opportunities for independent enquiry and extended writing. Yet higher attainers and others can flourish in an environment of research, discussion, collaboration and initiative.

43. There is a clear link between good teaching and accurate, helpful assessment. However, assessment continues to be a weakness in much geography teaching. Marking is an important part of such assessment and yet it is often poor, irregular, and not sufficiently formative or specific to geography. Targets, if they are included in the teacher's comments, are often too general to be helpful.

44. Overall, summative assessment, at the end of a year or key stage, still tends to dominate. Sometimes this is in order to meet whole-school reporting requirements, and these are not always appropriate.

45. Although many geography departments now have relevant data, they are used too rarely to plan schemes of work or sequences of lessons. Often, data are not used well to identify any discrepancies in achievement by different groups of pupils.

46. However, there have been some notable improvements in some schools. 'Assessment for learning' and better use of data have contributed to this improvement. Teachers are now more conscious of the need to seek and interpret evidence of whether pupils have learnt what was intended, and what steps need to be taken next, particularly through high quality questioning. Pupils' answers can be used to adapt planning and modify approaches to teaching and learning. These two examples illustrate good assessment:

Assessments are targeted at different themes, are differentiated and include fieldwork. Assignments have common, level-related marking criteria. There is internal standardisation through the sampling of pupils' work and assignment portfolios. Pupils know their National Curriculum levels and understand the targets they have been set. They discuss them frequently with their teachers. Pupils appreciate that the teachers use comments rather than grades and reward them for participating in class discussion and not just for written work.

In lessons there is much informal monitoring of pupils' progress and regular, and often instant, feedback to them. In Key Stage 3, each unit has some form of formal assessment using a variety of styles. Criteria are used for each National Curriculum level and these are discussed with the pupils. As a result, pupils understand their grades and levels clearly and what they have to do to improve.

47. Peer and self-assessment show signs of improvement. When done well, these are formative and vary in style: analysis of responses to questions, group presentations and the use of comments sheets in pupils' books to indicate grades and next steps.

In one school, pupils assessed each other's work against clear descriptions of levels and grades. This helped them to understand the quality of their own work better; good diagnostic marking also contributed to this. Pupils recorded their results on a progress chart and indicated with an arrow whether they had improved, remained the same or fallen. They also noted specific targets. All pupils were very clear about the process and how to achieve their geography-focused targets.

48. Additionally, peer assessment and discussion of achievement are part of a more active and engaging approach to geography.

The geography curriculum

49. Many pupils interviewed during inspections describe geography at Key Stage 3 as 'boring' and lacking relevance. In part, this may be due to its neglect. Often, the emphasis is on examination classes, with some deployment of non-specialist teachers in Key Stage 3. Dull teaching is also associated with the continuance of schemes of work that are heavy in content and lack relevance to modern geography. Some schools use the QCA's schemes, but these tend to be used as 'bolt on' additions rather than being adapted properly to meet the school's needs as was intended. Sometimes, too, the scheme of work is driven by those textbooks which are available and a limited range of resources. There is also some evidence of reductions in the time available for geography at Key Stage 3.

50. Such issues contribute to the small but steady fall in numbers of pupils choosing to study geography at GCSE, AS and A level. To some extent this may be

attributed to an increase in the number and range of other courses, particularly more vocationally orientated courses such as leisure and tourism. Ultimately, however, pupils make choices based largely on their Key Stage 3 experience. Pupils who have chosen geography say that they have done so because of high quality teaching and their own enjoyment of it.

51. The most effective curricula are planned to engage and interest pupils through a range of contrasting topics and activities. They involve high levels of challenge in terms of depth of knowledge and conceptual difficulty and are of clear and immediate relevance.

One of the challenging and exciting aspects of geography is its unusually broad base. For example, studying the natural and built features of the earth and the environmental, social and economic processes that shape and change them requires geography to explore a wide variety of physical and human sciences. You might sometimes wonder, therefore, where it begins and ends: what exactly is geography?¹⁷

52. For secondary teachers, the lack of support and advice in many local authorities constrains creative and professional debate about geography. For many geography departments in secondary schools, the only external subject-specific input occurs through examination board meetings.

53. The QCA is working with the awarding bodies and other key partners to revise GCSE, AS and A-level subject criteria for geography as part of the 11–19 reforms. It has recently published the revised programmes of study for Key Stage 3. These provide an opportunity for teachers to reconsider their schemes of work and develop livelier and more relevant curricula that meet pupils' needs.

54. A minority of geography departments have already done this. For example, one school identified gender as an important consideration:

The 'world of sport' unit includes work on the local football stadium, not just the football element but the local issue about the retail outlets on the site and why they are there. Year 9 pupils could explain how these issues related to their personal decision-making and discussed the environmental factors arising from decisions about the locations of football stadiums generally.

55. Some schools have improved their curricula by turning links with other subjects such as science, history, citizenship and vocational education to their advantage. With regard to citizenship, geography has a vital role to play, as David Bell (then Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools) identified in his Roscoe Lecture:

¹⁷ *About the action plan for geography*, Geographical Association and Royal Geographical Society, <http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/what-is-geography/about-the-action-plan-for-geography>.

...a partnership between geography and citizenship... will energise the former and give substance to the latter. The Key Stage 3 curriculum requires that pupils know about the world as a global community and the role of international organisations. By the end of Key Stage 4 they should understand the challenges of global interdependence and responsibility, sustainable development and Agenda 21. This is not textbook knowledge and understanding. Pupils should be examining the issues of the day and evaluating the way in which the media portrays them. They might be investigating specific issues and arguing a case, participating in activities that take their knowledge forward into action that is of benefit to themselves and others... Why are there not more geography departments which teach sustained and progressive units of work with citizenship objectives, making a substantial contribution to the citizenship curriculum overall? ...Citizenship can be a breath of fresh air, making geography relevant, exciting, and most important of all, empowering pupils so that they know how they can make a difference.¹⁸

56. One school showed well how these ideas can be taken forward:

Clear, planned links exist between geography and other curriculum aspects, such as citizenship and literacy. The work on fear of crime, fair trade and extreme environments, where pupils study the pressure on small-scale and global environments, helps them to understand their role as global citizens.

57. Geography should also be tied closely to issues of finance, enterprise and work on local, national and global scales. These are well provided for in the QCA schemes of work but, additionally, opportunities for studying issues of the moment arise daily.

58. Although these exciting and interesting developments are taking place, in many classes pupils proceed with the next section of the textbook. In the meantime, the world is changing around them unnoticed. This presents a major challenge for schools' geography.

Leadership and management

59. The increased emphasis on self-evaluation has encouraged departments to analyse their strengths and weaknesses more critically. Where this is supported by good monitoring by senior leadership in the school, where the evaluation is done effectively and honestly, and where teachers are receptive to change, departments are showing good capacity to improve. Good development planning draws on this self-evaluation and focuses on pupils' enjoyment and achievement. It uses data thoroughly to analyse outcomes and act accordingly, including modifying schemes of work or augmenting resources.

¹⁸ David Bell, 'Education for democratic citizenship', Roscoe Lecture, Liverpool, 2 November 2005.

60. Successful departments usually have good networking systems to support the subject, perhaps through subject associations, the local authority or partnerships with geography departments in other local schools. The gradual increase in the number of schools with geography as a lead or subsidiary subject as part of their humanities specialist status has the potential to provide a network for disseminating effective practice to local primary and secondary schools.

61. Some geography departments have taken good advantage of opportunities offered through the remodelling of the school workforce, as in this example:

The workforce remodelling agenda has led to the department having five hours a week of dedicated administrative support. This is reflected in the high quality of displays and the frequency with which they are changed. It creates time for proper leadership and management instead of more routine administrative tasks such as displays and organising or checking resources.

62. Open and critical self-evaluation and action, however, are far from universal. Some departments use reasonably good examination results to conceal the need for action. Weak leadership typically shows itself in:

- outdated schemes of work which do not adequately deal with learning, assessment or differentiation
- improvement plans which lack clear targets, success criteria and arrangements for monitoring
- monitoring limited to lesson observations for performance management or scrutinies of pupils' work without a clear focus
- inadequate support or challenge by senior leaders for the department to help it tackle problems and bring about positive change
- limited analysis of data which is not used well to identify underachievement or to set development priorities
- self-evaluation based on opinion rather than evidence
- departmental handbooks and other documentation which provide poor support for new staff
- a failure to seek pupils' views on the quality of provision.

Part B. Issues in geography

Making geography relevant: lessons from the GCSE pilot

63. During 2003, schools were invited to become involved in a radically different GCSE pilot examination in geography, which placed a greater emphasis on assessed units of work throughout the course and an examination at the end of the first year of study. In September 2003, 18 schools joined the pilot as cohort 1, with a further 32 schools in September 2004. Currently, the number of schools involved has risen to 74.

64. The schools varied from large comprehensives to much smaller schools in rural and urban settings, and a number of independent schools. Some of the schools taking part had previously achieved good results at GCSE level in geography, others less good, and a number, but not all, had decreasing numbers of students choosing to study geography in Year 10. The size of these departments varied, as did their structure: some were part of a humanities faculty, others were two-teacher departments.

65. The pilot aimed to provide a lively and innovative geography course for 14–16-year-olds that reflected pupils' needs and current thinking in the subject. It also offered a hybrid examination model, allowing pupils to follow an academic or vocational/applied pathway within the geography qualification. By studying for just one year, they could gain a short-course GCSE; if they continued with the full course, a full GCSE was available at the end of two years.

66. The course was organised around five concepts:

- uneven development
- interdependence
- futures
- sustainability
- globalisation.

It encouraged different ways of learning, had significantly less content than the traditional GCSE examination and involved innovative forms of assessment.

67. In nearly all the schools visited, the impetus to become involved came from the geography department, which gained the support of senior leaders for the project. Where this support was strong, the departments usually found it easier to gain time for planning, especially in the early stages of the pilot. The motives for involvement varied, and included, predominantly, dissatisfaction with existing GCSEs; they also included declining results in geography, declining uptake, or simply a welcoming of innovation.

'Our geography'. Palatine Community Sports College, Blackpool: raising the quality of pupils' understanding

Our school is an average sized mixed comprehensive school in the south Blackpool area for 1,077 pupils aged 11–16. The school was selected to be one of the first schools nationally to pilot the new geography GCSE, and the first cohort of pupils completed the course in 2005. The school felt that the current GCSE was formulaic and prescriptive and that this pilot exam would be more suited to pupils' needs. There was a belief that the emphasis upon coursework (67%) might be more suited to pupils who often found exams daunting, and that the focus on enquiry and research would foster deeper learning and understanding of the subject.

The previous year, the local transport enquiry had been fairly successful and the coursework moderator had identified the strong focus on geographical knowledge and skills. However, weaknesses were identified in the lack of opportunity for individual interpretation and understanding.

The challenge was to develop the previous formulaic tasks focusing on traffic surveys and questionnaires to provide increased opportunities for the pupils to engage in more qualitative and evaluative responses. This involved a greater focus on discovery and enquiry. The intention was to improve attainment, develop literacy skills and provide more opportunities for greater individuality and pupils' ownership of their learning.

Pupils completed a transect along a route from the rural/urban fringe on the outskirts of Blackpool to the central business district. They identified a range of transport-related issues and filmed these using a digital video camera. Specific locations were identified by the pupils themselves on an Ordnance Survey map extract and eight key areas were identified and revisited for further investigation. Greater discussion took place as pupils edited their film, and photographs were turned into a poster which was displayed around the school to allow individual pupils to comment and express their views on the issues identified.

This consultation process widened the debate and raised whole-school awareness of how individuals can contribute to environmental degradation through their actions and choice of transport. Pupils also interviewed local residents in the locations and collated views and opinions, which were synthesised and evaluated before the pupils completed their own individual accounts of the impact on the local community. Letters were also written to the council and local newspaper to emphasise how individuals might involve themselves in local issues and make a difference in influencing developments.

The standard and quality of the work in terms of range and quality were far superior to the previous year and more pupils were able to reach higher levels of attainment. Pupils' writing was also more reflective and of a higher quality. Sound geographical observations and comments about local community issues were substantiated with well reasoned arguments. Through developing this more pupil-centred approach, pupils worked better collaboratively and engaged in some lively discussion. The work of less able pupils was more evaluative; previously, it had tended to be mainly descriptive. Pupils also took advantage of the opportunity to present their findings in a wider range of ways, including photographs and annotated maps, rather than depending upon more formal written reports.

Pupils' comments, on the whole, were more positive than in previous years and they were more enthusiastic about completing the coursework. The sharing of ideas and greater collaboration improved their speaking

and listening skills. The coursework was easily organised and caused little additional disruption to other areas of the curriculum and some pupils were sufficiently motivated to revisit and work independently to enhance their final submissions.

68. The majority of schools chose to involve all their Year 10 geography students in the full GCSE course. A few schools ran the pilot alongside the traditional GCSE.

69. In a small number of the schools, the new course was set in the context of plans to reduce Key Stage 3. This would enable all students to take the pilot short course in Year 9 and to continue with geography, if they chose to, in Year 10.

70. Teachers in the pilot valued the course because of the reduction in prescribed content. Pupils, particularly boys, liked the style and weighting of the course, preferring small assessed assignments rather than larger coursework projects. Placing the formal examination in Year 10 was also viewed very positively, and was seen as a spur to continue in Year 11.

71. By far the most difficult issue for teachers at the start of the pilot was the limited lead-in time and a very real shortage of time to plan the course and associated materials. Teachers reported that the late arrival of materials and guidance from the examination board created uncertainty. A lack of specific guidance on assessment criteria and examination papers to work on was a particular frustration.

72. The quality of teaching of the pilot course shared the same strengths and weaknesses as geography teaching more broadly. Good lessons enabled pupils to engage with real issues such as the environment and sustainability. In weaker teaching, teachers were uncertain of the depth of coverage. For example, in the unit on 'Extreme Environment', topics such as glaciation or plate tectonics were covered only superficially. Some of the physical geography was taught in a traditional way which did not fit with the more creative philosophy of the pilot.

73. Teachers in only a minority of the schools surveyed were able to exploit modern technology to the full. This hampered innovative and interactive approaches. In a small number of schools, very good online materials had been created for pupils to use outside lessons and, in some cases, these were accessible from home.

74. In several of the schools, teachers had not fully understood the assessment arrangements or correctly identified appropriate assessment tasks. One school, however, had developed effective alternative assessed coursework which consisted of a radio broadcast, a film and several PowerPoint presentations.

75. There was an association between the involvement of the schools in the pilot and the quality of their self-review. In particular, the views of pupils and teachers were sought extensively to improve the quality of the learning in subsequent years.

76. The teachers benefited from regular national project meetings as well as the support provided by the Geographical Association and, where available, local authority advisory staff and local clusters of schools. Teachers who were not supported in these ways found it difficult to develop their own resources.

77. Pupils were overwhelmingly positive about the course and its relevance to them as young citizens. They said, for instance, that the unit on 'My Place' helped them see their own environment in a different light. They enjoyed opportunities to engage with local planning and decision-making. Fieldwork linked to various units of work had been a highlight for many.

'Our geography'. Southfield Technology College, Cumbria: getting the best out of questionnaires

Ours is a smaller than average mixed comprehensive with 764 pupils, including 82 in the sixth form. In Year 10, fieldwork is a necessary element of at least one of the three core units delivered in the first year as part of the new pilot GCSE course. It is also a requirement of the pilot for pupils to have a deeper understanding of how values, attitudes and opinions vary amongst people and they need to be able to express these whilst also formulating opinions of their own. This is a real challenge for many pupils as they struggle to identify their own opinions, let alone justify them and those of others. Values and attitudes need to be dealt with using real life and real people and fieldwork makes this possible.

The nature of the new GCSE provides an ideal opportunity to embed fieldwork into schemes of work as it is not overly prescriptive and content heavy. This allows for greater development of individual topics. The fieldwork carried out in Year 10 also provides an opportunity for the pupils to develop their social, emotional and behavioural skills that are taken for granted in many situations.

The purpose of this piece of fieldwork was to find out how much the people of Workington knew about the issue of wind farms in the local area and what their opinions were about current and future developments. The pupils were to report the findings of their research to the local MP in a report-style letter. Before the fieldwork the pupils had carried out research on the Internet to find out more about wind farms. They had used the interactive section of the Centre for Alternative Technology website, the online archive of the local newspaper and standard GCSE textbooks to gather background information.

There were two strands to the fieldwork. The first involved pupils carrying out a perception analysis. This was a useful way of gauging the group's opinion of the impact of wind farms on the local area. They looked at a local view without a wind farm and scored it on scale between 1 and 7 for various bipolar semantics (e.g. beautiful/ugly, empty/crowded). The

group's data were averaged for each pair of words and then processed further to calculate an overall score. Secondly, they were to carry out a questionnaire in the local town centre. In order to give the pupils autonomy, they were asked to come up with at least five appropriate questions that would enable them to find out about how much people knew about the issue of wind farms in the local area and also what their opinions were. In small groups these questions were accepted or rejected until a consensus was reached as to which questions would provide them with the information they needed. Their next task was to order the questions effectively. This allowed pupils to think about what sort of questions they would be asking (open/closed), increasing the level of difficulty or length of response required as the questionnaire progressed. The final version was agreed by the whole class.

Before venturing out to the town centre, the group carried out an exercise where they thought of all the possible initial responses they might find when asking people to take part in a survey. They considered how it would make them feel, how they might want to respond and how they should respond. This developed their confidence to approach the general public, allowed them to consider some elements of risk assessment and also to instil a sense of survey etiquette that some members of the group needed more than others.

78. The pilot has now been running for over three years, teachers have gained confidence, and more and better materials are available. In order to move forward, schools and others need to:

- sharpen assessment, with a better understanding of the rationale for assessment and the mark scheme
- provide sufficient time to develop good quality resources
- develop departmental Intranet websites to support the course and encourage off-site learning
- develop regional networks to enable teachers to share resources and ideas, as well as to provide regular opportunities for cross-school moderation.

The value and importance of fieldwork

Geographical enquiry encourages questioning, investigation and critical thinking about issues affecting the world and people's lives, now and in the future. Fieldwork is an essential element of this. Pupils learn to think spatially and use maps, visual images and new technologies, including geographical information systems, to obtain, present and analyse information.¹⁹

¹⁹ *Geography: programme of study for key stage 3 and attainment target*. QCA, 2007, p101.

79. Between 2004 and 2006, Ofsted's geography surveys sought, in particular, to identify causes for the decline of fieldwork and find examples of effective practice in primary and secondary schools and at field centres; evidence from whole-school inspections and from other organisations was also used.

80. The National Curriculum for geography requires pupils to 'carry out fieldwork investigations outside the classroom'; activities should be planned to enable all pupils to 'be included and to participate actively and safely in geography fieldwork'.²⁰ Fieldwork is an essential part of all National Frameworks 3–19. It is explicit in the Foundation Stage as identified in the Early Learning Goals where pupils are expected to 'observe, find out about and identify features in the place they live and the natural world' and 'find out about their environment'. The statutory geography curriculum (Key Stages 1–3) expects pupils to participate in 'fieldwork investigations outside the classroom'. GCSE criteria require students to 'acquire and apply techniques of enquiry – including fieldwork' and at AS/A level they are required to 'undertake investigative work and use primary sources including fieldwork'.

'Our geography'. The Fountains Community Special Schools Federation, Staffordshire: don't leave me out!

Our school is one of Staffordshire's newly formed federated special schools and is a partnership between two all-age schools on adjacent sites. These schools cater for pupils with both moderate and severe learning difficulties. The inclusion unit is for pupils aged 11–16 with moderate learning difficulties who also show behavioural problems. They are educated in a small unit of seven pupils, two of whom are part-time. Staffing levels need to be high with one teacher and two teaching assistants. The pupils need additional support to cope with everyday school life. Some pupils join some lessons in the main part of the school, but these lessons are carefully selected and they are often supported by a familiar member of staff. Some pupils are achieving up to National Curriculum level 4 in some subjects, whilst others are working towards level 1. Literacy is generally poor amongst these pupils.

The intention was to get the pupils to identify one group of people who they thought might have access problems, such as wheelchair users, and to increase their awareness of accessibility issues. During the course of the field investigation, they were to choose a method to investigate these difficulties, for example one student was to move around a place in a wheelchair. One of the pupils had been blind since birth and it was decided to investigate how accessible the local town centre was for a person who was blind. They explored the shopping centre and a variety of services, such as the library. The group worked as a team to find any

²⁰ *Geography: the National Curriculum for England key stages 1–3*. QCA, 2000, pp17, 20 and 25.

information for the blind, such as Braille maps, menus and information signs. They photographed their findings and used a dictaphone to record any comments.

The pupils developed a range of valuable geographical skills through this work. They identified how the limitations of the physical environment can have an impact on the inclusion of certain groups of individuals. The pupils would have found it virtually impossible to imagine the restrictions that the town centre could have on a person. It became a quest for them to find any provision at all for blind people. The situation was very much centred on real issues and, because of this, the pupils were well motivated. They could see a reason for conducting this work because it was more meaningful to them than an abstract concept. The pupils worked well as a team and were genuinely concerned for the welfare of their peer and how blindness must affect every element of her life. The active geography evoked real feelings about a place. The pupils were outraged at the lack of facilities available. They worked with staff to compile a letter to the shopping centre manager to highlight the issues and the changes they hoped to bring about.

This active geography was effective because it was based around a real issue and the impact that this issue has on the life of a person that the pupils knew and respected. The pupils involved were reluctant to present their findings in written form, despite their motivation and engagement during the activity. However the experience of taking part in the activity was valuable learning in itself and pupils were keen to put together a group response. They eventually worked with another pupil from the school to produce a PowerPoint presentation which was made available for the rest of the school so they could become more aware of accessibility issues.

81. The previous Ofsted report on geography identified that:

Well planned fieldwork in geography adds clear value to learning in the subject as well as providing a positive contribution to the wider curriculum. Pupils gain first-hand, practical experiences which support and reinforce knowledge, skills and concepts explored in the classroom. Memorable experiences support long-term learning and recall. Good fieldwork encourages geographical enquiry and frequently can lead to higher-order thinking and learning.²¹

²¹ The 2004/05 secondary geography subject report is on its Annual Report's microsite: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/annualreport0405/4.2.6.html.

82. This view is supported by the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee report on education outside the classroom.²² Most teachers, too, value fieldwork. As one head of department succinctly stated when interviewed during an inspection, 'Geography without fieldwork is like science without experiments'.

83. Enquiry-based fieldwork sharpens and deepens learners' understanding of geography and the progressive development of geographical skills, both in situ and in the lessons in school related to it. For example:

A Year 9 class had made a field visit to a local country park to study its features, the impact of visitors and its management. The learning objectives were to identify the difference between 'primary' and 'secondary' features in the country park and develop the skill of higher level annotation to record their observations. Following an animated discussion of the features of the park, the teacher demonstrated the annotation of a photograph on the overhead projector. Some poor annotated comments were given, and these were criticised by pupils and the annotation was improved to be more 'informative, focused and simple'. At the end of this episode, the pupils understood what they were doing, why and how to do it well. They applied this to their own fieldwork examples, achieving excellent standards of annotation to point out primary and secondary features.

84. Follow up from fieldwork also provides very good support for extended writing, numeracy linked to the analysis of data, sketching, map work, formulating hypotheses and thinking skills.

85. Fieldwork often takes place in environments which are unfamiliar or less familiar to pupils. The *Learning outside the classroom manifesto*²³ identifies the value of fieldwork and out-of-classroom experiences as:

- developing the ability to deal with uncertainty
- providing challenge and the opportunity to take acceptable levels of risk.

86. In the schools visited for the fieldwork survey, risk assessments were appropriately prepared and, in most cases, parents and pupils were provided with good written and oral briefings. The best practice involved pupils in the planning so that they were able to identify and discuss the risks of working in an unfamiliar environment and consider the implications for their own behaviour.

²² *Education outside the classroom – second report of session 2004–05*, Education and Skills Select Committee (HC 120), 2005, p3; available from www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmmeduski/120/12002.htm.

²³ DCSF (ref. 04232-2006DOM-EN), 2006; available from www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials/outsideclassroom/.

'Our geography'. Welland Primary School, Worcestershire: staying safe

Our school is a small village primary with 140 pupils. 'Cool school, cool planet: thinking globally, acting locally' is a unit of work written for mixed-age classes. It focuses on climate change and sustainability, embedding the principles of Eco-Schools into a practical curriculum context.²⁴ Part of the unit involved a mapping audit of the school and grounds to determine sustainability behaviour. Findings were analysed, conclusions drawn and implications for improving sustainable actions were highlighted. Waste reduction became a major point for discussion and provided a platform for the main fieldwork enquiry: 'How can we make a safe visit to a landfill and recycling centre?' The objectives of the visit were to enable pupils to recognise what a landfill site and recycling centre is like and to understand its functions. This was also intended to encourage recognition of a risk or hazard to enable them to make a child-initiated risk assessment by predicting what the main hazards would be on the field visit and how these risks could be minimised to make a visit safe.

Photos were used to stimulate class discussion about: i) the appearance and functions of a landfill site and recycling centre and ii) what is a risk or hazard? In mixed ability groups, pupils used discussion, brainstorming, mind mapping and role play to consider specific hazards in the photos. They made recommendations about how to overcome these as well as justifying their choices.

On the visit, groups of pupils toured the landfill site in a Land Rover under the supervision of waste managers, and the recycling centre on foot. They had to decide collaboratively where to take relevant photos and make individual sketches of hazards and safety control measures such as signs and safety fences, giving reasons for their choices. They also had to decide how safety could be further improved. They listened to a presentation on waste management and sustainability and asked questions in response such as 'How does the site reduce its production of greenhouse gases?', 'What will happen when the landfill site is full?' and 'What do you think it is like for local residents?' Back at school they had to use a software package, select one of the photographs they had taken, list any visible and hidden hazards and decide what control measures were needed. These were written up as instructions to enable future visits to be safer. An instruction leaflet was produced for dissemination by the landfill site manager to other primary schools before or during a visit.

²⁴ Eco-Schools is an international programme providing a structured approach to environmental education, involving pupils, teachers, parents and governors. More information is available at: www.eco-schools.org.uk/whatis/index.htm.

This fieldwork highly motivated and engaged pupils with a real sense of purpose. Follow up to fieldwork can often be an anticlimax. However, in this case, the pupils remained enthusiastic and motivated because they were working for a real audience and in a relevant and meaningful context. Pupils were very proud of their work, which was produced to a higher standard than normal. This raised awareness of safety issues, both inside and outside the school. Pupils were empowered by identifying risks and control measures themselves, before and during the visit. The sheer scale of the 'lunar landscape' created by the landfill touched their emotions and made them resolve to reduce waste. Their 'eco-warrior' instincts were activated and these messages were shared with their families. Overall, pupils gained an understanding that safety is a vital ingredient for an enjoyable visit.

87. Reception and Key Stage 1 classes often use the immediate locality of the school effectively. Typically, this involves local visits and walks, when pupils are introduced to comparisons of land use and environmental change in the local area. Activities include walking around the school environment, noting features and places they like and dislike and the completion of simple traffic surveys as part of their awareness of the need to stay safe. During a 'weather watch week', pupils in one school devised recording sheets and collected data using a range of weather station equipment.

88. Good practice in Key Stage 2 builds on these foundations, working in greater depth on local issues and also developing pupils' understanding of contrasting environments at increasing distance from the school. Investigations include weather, transport, tourism, coastal and river studies. For example, pupils identified the shortest and safest routes to the nearby beach, where they completed observations on tides and pollution. In another school, visits to a nearby railway station were completed as part of a wider topic on transport and issues linked to commuting.

'Our geography'. Parsons Down Junior School, Berkshire: staying healthy

Our school is a large junior school with 308 pupils in Thatcham, just outside Newbury. Currently, there is a whole-school focus on writing and developing speaking and listening skills (which are in need of improvement across the school). For the pupils to gain the most from their fieldwork visit to Thatcham it was necessary to prepare the pupils thoroughly in both the context of the study as well as the range of information-collecting skills they would need to use. Pupils were asked to consider the key question: 'Should Thatcham Broadway be pedestrianised?'

Initial discussions in class enabled the pupils to share their own perceptions of Thatcham Broadway and how it could be improved. At first,

they considered only their own opinions, but soon began to realise that there were different vested interests. To broaden their thinking, as part of a homework task, they were asked to gauge the opinions of a variety of different people such as the elderly, teenagers, mothers and shop owners. This provided a rich variety of information which divided groups into the 'for' or 'against' camp. A further lesson was used to familiarise pupils with the layout of Thatcham Broadway. The use of photographs and memory maps enabled the pupils to focus on the key features of the town centre and to develop a sense of place. This enabled them to draw accurate maps of the area to be studied, including symbols and a key.

A lesson was used for pupils to explore what they had to do to determine whether Thatcham Broadway should be pedestrianised. They discussed possible ways of collecting the information and suggested questionnaires for passers by and traffic counts at identified locations. Pupils developed their own questionnaires and practised their interviewing techniques in the classroom. The final preparation lesson focused on the need to be aware of risks. Following discussions, pupils were able to contribute to the risk assessment, as well as drawing up a code of behaviour.

This extensive preparation ensured that the pupils were clear about what they were expected to do during the field visit. They carried out the range of tasks competently, including the questionnaires, measuring pavement widths and taking pedestrian counts, as well as identifying car parking locations. The time spent on preparation developed their confidence and encouraged them to improve their communication skills. Their written reports enabled them to develop the quality of their writing beyond basic description to 'more reasoned argument'. The pupils understood that their conclusions did not have to be definitive but could include personal opinion through the use of phrases such as 'in my opinion...', 'I think that...', 'perhaps...' and 'it might be possible to...'. This was summarised in a letter published in the local paper:

'In a recent survey that our class carried out at Thatcham Broadway, we discovered that more than half of all respondents wanted pedestrianisation or part-pedestrianisation. Some people still want cars to be allowed in The Broadway. In elderly people's cases this is because they have to walk there and they can't walk very far. In other cases they live too far away from the centre to walk. However, I strongly believe that Thatcham Broadway should be pedestrianised. The centre could be the most beautiful and interesting place in the town. You could even build a play park on half of the green for the children. You could keep the other half as a green. The elderly people would love a nice quiet place with no cars, so they can relax. Children would also love to be able to not have to worry about the cars. It would also make Thatcham Broadway a healthier and safer place for everyone. Children wouldn't be breathing in exhaust

fumes. Flowers would liven up The Broadway as well. A fountain so big you could paddle in would be a big hit, especially in the summer.'

89. Residential visits in Years 5 and 6 are often linked to the study of a contrasting locality. In some schools, good links with other subjects were made as pupils developed map and numeracy skills through orienteering activities. Through river studies and the study of weather or the ecology of the local woodland, pupils reinforced learning and made links, for example, with science.

90. Despite such benefits, some primary schools undertake little planned geography fieldwork and this is associated with the weaknesses in teaching and curriculum planning outlined in part A of this report.

91. In the secondary schools where fieldwork was a strength, it was significant in pupils' views of the subject and, indeed, in the choices they made. One inspector recorded:

The fieldwork programme is very effective and makes a strong contribution to the good examination results achieved in geography. Fieldwork is a factor in influencing the pupils' choice of geography at Key Stage 4, with 44% of the cohort choosing geography. The fieldwork programme includes local area work and also residential work in all key stages, giving the pupils geographical insights into local issues and aspects of physical and human geography.

92. Even so, two thirds of the schools in the sample did not meet the statutory requirements for fieldwork. Pupils who have had limited fieldwork experience before GCSE often rely on the teacher for guidance, which results in much of the work set being unimaginative, heavily structured and not integrated with pupils' classroom learning to enhance their understanding of geographical concepts. Too often, tasks are mundane with little to challenge higher attaining pupils.

93. However, in a minority of cases, fieldwork exercises use a range of techniques such as sketching, mapping and questionnaires to support the development of pupils' enquiry skills. Additionally, clear links are made between fieldwork activity and the topics being studied in the classroom. The following typifies good practice:

The fieldwork programme is based on a series of fieldwork enquiries which allow pupils to develop data collection skills but also an understanding of the structure of fieldwork and how it is reported. The fieldwork is used in conjunction with a wide range of other activities to give pupils understanding in depth of a particular topic. All Year 7 pupils visit the Natural History Museum in London to study volcanoes and earthquakes as part of their study of natural hazards. The newly acquired weather station will enable pupils to familiarise themselves with the collection and use of data: all Year 8 pupils carry out an enquiry into infiltration rates on different surfaces in the school grounds. Results are collated, graphed and

analysed. This provides a good introduction to enable them to carry out river fieldwork based at the Juniper Hall Field Studies Centre later in the year. Three sites on the River Tillingbourne are visited and a series of measurements taken. These are then collated, results graphed and the whole enquiry laid out on posters, some of which are then used for display. All Year 9 pupils visit a trade and development fair where pupils interview industrialists and business people about trading with poorer countries. This supports their work on the global dimension and development.

94. In the schools where fieldwork is effective, there is clear progression between each key stage, with pupils able to build up their fieldwork skills in a variety of contexts:

There is a planned programme of fieldwork activities across the year groups. Year 7 pupils undertake field sketching in the school grounds and participate in a one day visit to Calshot Spit to investigate coastal processes and the impact of changing physical features on human decision-making. Their work shows particular strengths in visual and diagrammatic techniques such as annotated sketches, maps and diagrams. In Year 8, pupils visit a regional country park at Dinton Pastures to investigate environmental issues and decisions about managing land use. Reflecting the objectives of the fieldwork, pupils show that they can voice their opinions, values and attitudes; additionally the work produced shows that this has helped their skills of extended writing. In Year 10, a mini-investigation into car origins in the local area provides a good foundation for pupils' later studies of the manufacturing industry. In Year 12, a local river study is well linked to the development of key skills, as well as to geographical skills. A visit for all students to a Field Studies Council centre in North Wales gives good reinforcement of topics and access to a wide variety of fieldwork skills in human and physical geography.

95. A minority of schools make longer residential visits to enrich learners' geographical understanding as well as to provide material for coursework. A few schools encourage higher attaining pupils to undertake independent comparisons of fieldwork sites to extend their learning further. Post-16 fieldwork often reflects the pattern at Key Stage 4, but there is greater use of residential field study centres. Much of the coursework arising from field studies is of good quality, well organised and uses ICT effectively. It shows that pupils have had appropriate support in choosing topics, guidance notes and rules about layout and writing.

'Our geography'. John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre, Herefordshire: the benefits of residential fieldwork

Our school is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11–18 in Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire. It is also a technology college. A

comprehensive fieldwork programme is central to the study of geography and enables pupils in each key stage to develop and utilise their fieldwork skills progressively. This programme has been developed over a period of years in close consultation and negotiation with the local authority and school managers about health and safety and to minimise curriculum disruption and supply cover costs.

It was felt that a residential field trip to Llanrug in early September of Year 10 as a launch to the GCSE course might provide a chance to further develop pupils' fieldwork skills in a spectacular environment at an excellent centre as well as boost numbers opting for geography. Year 10 pupils are taught in mixed attainment classes which have ranged in size from 15 to 36 pupils, depending on option patterns and timetable issues. There have not been more than two classes for many years but this may increase to three if option numbers continue to rise. Pupils who opt for geography are nearly always doing so as a positive move rather than by default. Pupils opt into the Llanrug field trip and as option numbers grow, so does the percentage of the cohort who opt to come on the visit. The centre has a maximum capacity of about 40 pupils. The centre is owned by another local authority and provides an experienced tutor and much documentation, including risk assessments.

The programme of activities was discussed and drawn up between the centre's tutor and the school's teacher. Content was drawn from the GCSE syllabus. The greatest task was fitting the course into the school calendar with minimum disruption; this was achieved by travelling to the centre after school on the first Thursday of term and returning the following Sunday afternoon.

Pupils used the centre's equipment to measure variables such as river depth, velocity and gradient. Services available in settlements of various sizes were surveyed, and field sketches drawn and labelled. Pupils also became accustomed to following up fieldwork in the centre's classroom, often into the early evening after dinner where they analysed the data they had collected in the field with the help of a laptop computer and the centre's data projector.

Pupils gained a deeper understanding of ideas taught in the classroom, such as those related to hierarchies of settlements. Later in the course they were able to apply these ideas and skills to complete GCSE coursework on the sphere of influence of Ross-on-Wye. Their experience of fieldwork contributed to their growing confidence in identifying relevant geographical questions, their ability to decide on strategies for data collection and their improved skills in analysing findings.

96. Residential visits can provide outstanding contexts for geography fieldwork. In primary schools, these usually take place in Years 5 and 6, but often geography has

a negligible role, as the focus is on sports, team-building activities or other subjects. It is disappointing to find schools that take pupils on a visit to a coastal location and include work in science on the local flora and fauna but ignore the wealth of opportunity for geographical study.

97. Most residential fieldwork in secondary schools takes place in Key Stage 4 and post-16. Often the fieldwork and data collected during a residential visit is used for geographical coursework submission at GCSE, AS and A level.

98. The quality of preparation for residential fieldwork visits varies greatly. In the case of examination classes preparation was careful and comprehensive. The quality also depends, to some degree, on the expectations and perceptions of the centres themselves. Centres usually offer schools a pre-planned experience, but this does not always meet a school's requirements, particularly if the school has a narrow interest in collecting data to complete coursework. However, where preparation is good and there is transparency, good liaison and clarity of purpose between the school and the centre, the content and activities are frequently matched well to pupils' needs.

99. Safety is a priority on residential visits and risk assessments are rigorous. Safety is constantly reinforced, especially with younger pupils. The outcomes are generally very positive: behaviour is very good and teachers report better behaviour, even from some difficult pupils who thrive in the unfamiliar setting. In general, too, pupils' social and teamwork skills improve.

100. In a minority of cases, residential fieldwork experiences did not realise this potential. In particular, pupils who arrived insufficiently prepared and with limited geographical knowledge often constrained what could be attempted, as well as the possible outcomes. Particular weaknesses arose where pupils did not have the necessary skills of enquiry. For example, some pupils did not understand that, in setting up hypotheses, they had to ask a series of questions. Teaching therefore needed to compensate for this, leading, in some cases, to teachers having to give a lot of information directly. Where a centre's staff acted as tutors, teachers tended to adopt a low-key role. These lost opportunities to develop a proper partnership could leave the teacher less well prepared to follow up the work on return to school.

'Our geography'. St. Ambrose Barlow RC High School & Technology College, Salford: pupils' views of the value of fieldwork

'Our time in St. Ambrose Barlow has already taken us from places as far flung as New York to as close to home as the local precinct. We believe fieldwork is the most down-to-earth form of learning in geography. Our teachers constantly strive for new methods of teaching to captivate our attention.

Fieldwork allows us as students to interact with the environment we learn about and bring the textbooks to life. The term fieldwork generally means

getting out and about in the real world. Geography lessons are particularly interesting to us because of the wide use of interesting resources ranging from PowerPoint presentations to whiteboards, videos to textbooks. In the classroom we learn the facts and figures of the world around us; during fieldwork we can get valuable hands-on experience to enhance our knowledge, giving us the best of both worlds.

During our visit to Malham, we encompassed the key elements of the syllabus within a few days. This is what makes geography unique, it is in the world around us and it is alive. Pupils can't walk across a bridge and suddenly see an example of Pythagoras's theorem or sit beneath a tree and see one of Shakespeare's plays gradually unroll its mysteries. Standing beneath Malham Cove placed the textbook pictures into true scale. But it was not only rocks and landscapes we studied – we visited a local farm and river, carried out surveys on the local population, encountered how vast resources can affect a small community, but most importantly, we enjoyed it. We had a sensational time in Malham and what we learnt over a few days would have certainly taken a month or two in the classroom.'

101. If the volume and quality of fieldwork are to improve, some barriers, real and imagined, need to be overcome. Asked during inspection about the lack of fieldwork, senior leaders tend to cite poor behaviour, logistical difficulties including the large numbers of pupils involved, and disruption to the timetable, cost, or health and safety issues and cultural barriers, particularly with regard to Muslim girls. In a small minority of schools, headteachers have refused permission for pupils to be taken off-site. Such concerns need to be set against the undoubted benefits of good fieldwork. Whenever pupils engage in fieldwork activity outside the classroom and the school environment, safety issues are constantly reinforced. Inspection visits to field centres and schools show that pupils are made fully aware of safety issues, whether they are working in an urban, rural or an upland environment. Most effective practice occurs where work in the classroom also reinforces the need to avoid risk and stay safe.

102. The most significant enabling factors for fieldwork programmes in schools are adequate staffing and financial support. These programmes can be increased and staffed through the greater use of skilled learning/teaching assistants, either to cover classes or accompany visits. Where schools are part of a local sixth form consortium, fieldwork in Years 12 and 13 can be staffed by teachers from more than one school. Parent associations can also help to ensure fieldwork is inclusive by supporting the costs for groups or individuals.

The global dimension: helping to put back the relevance into geography

Education plays a vital role in helping pupils and young people recognise their contribution and responsibilities as citizens of this global community

and equipping them with the skills to make informed decisions and take responsible actions. Through including the global dimension in teaching, links can be made between local and global issues. It also means that young people are given opportunities to: critically examine their own values and attitudes; appreciate the similarities between peoples everywhere, and value diversity; understand the global context of their local lives; and develop skills that will enable them to combat injustice, prejudice and discrimination. Such knowledge, skills and understanding enable young people to make informed decisions about playing an active role in the global community.²⁵

103. Primary schools vary widely in the degree to which they teach about the global dimension. Overall provision is satisfactory. In the majority of schools in the sample visited, the global dimension of geography was apparent in theme weeks, assemblies and international links rather than through the subject itself. For example, pupils made collections for charities to provide a water supply in Bolivia or goats in southern Asia; but these areas of the world were not then developed as geographical topics. This is exemplified in one school where possible links remained underdeveloped:

Work in Year 5 on football shirts considered the issue of child labour in India. However, this was not linked to that morning's 'fair trade' assembly when bananas were discussed. The opportunities for pupils to make connections were lost.

104. Most primary schools' schemes of work give insufficient explicit consideration to the global dimension. Where it occurs, the emphasis tends to be on place rather than global interdependence or the connectivity of places themselves. Sometimes, topics such as global warming are taught, but the geographical dimension is absent. Examples include the study of water supply and disease control through the personal, social and health education programme and assemblies. This may be very well done, including inviting outside speakers to talk about themes such as 'Water Aid' or Leprosy (about the location and control of leprosy), but these concerns are not then reinforced through geography.

105. The following characterise the minority of schools where pupils' understanding of the global dimension is good.

- Links are made between fair trade and exploitation, poverty, wealth and interdependence.
- Good resources about another country are often used in lessons: for example, pupils' learning about another country is enhanced through a

²⁵ *Developing a global dimension in the school curriculum* (DfES-1409-2005), DfES, 2005; available from www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/guidanceonthelaw/115_00/.

teacher's personal connections or pupils' own experiences or background heritage.

- Education for sustainable development is central to the school's philosophy, with pupils studying topics such as global warming, sustainability and the impact of their actions at local, national and global levels.
- The geography curriculum includes units of work on distant places, including for example 'Weather around the world', 'Passport to the world', 'What's in the news' or 'An African village'.

106. The following example shows the benefits of such approaches:

There is a considered focus on developing pupils to become modern world citizens, reflecting well most of the Every Child Matters outcomes. Pupils can explain the rationale behind the decisions that are made that have an impact on their school environment, such as how the trees planted will affect drainage in the school grounds, or what crops should be cultivated in the school vegetable garden. The pupils make their own recommendations about the food provided by the school at lunchtime and they are listened to. In their study of local and distant places, the pupils regularly make their own decisions about what they want to find out and they are free to send letters and emails to local, national and global 'experts' to help them to find answers to questions. In Key Stage 2, pupils can usually choose what they want to record, following their investigations. They are confident in making oral presentations and considering their quality, and they regularly challenge each other through logical debate and well considered questions. They are developing a particularly good understanding of the interaction between local actions and global impact and how this affects the opportunities for economic well-being for themselves and those in other countries. They do not accept stereotypical views of other societies.

107. Where practice is better developed, pupils' own experiences of journeys, cultures and views on their local area are taken further to increase the global dimension of the geography curriculum. The following is a good example of an approach which is easy to apply:

When pupils take extended holidays abroad, they are given learning packs to encourage them to take photographs and record their experiences through drawing and writing. When pupils complete the work, it is shared with other pupils and contributes to their geographical understanding.

108. In the sample of secondary schools visited, pupils' understanding of the global dimension was usually satisfactory, but it was good in only a minority of schools. In many schools, the focus was on only a narrow range of places or case studies. Countries that were studied in greater depth, often revisited during the key stage, were Brazil, Kenya, Italy and Japan. The danger of this is that other countries and

areas which are of great significance in shaping the world now are ignored, including South East Asia, China and the Middle East. Often, the global dimension is not studied in greater depth until Year 9.

109. A further problem is that, whatever countries are chosen, pupils' knowledge of them is not extended from local to global, and links between them to develop broader understanding are not made. 'Acting locally, thinking globally' is a cornerstone of the global dimension. Pupils in secondary schools should be thinking about the issues of global citizenship, conflict resolution, diversity, human rights, interdependence, social justice and sustainable development. However, in many schemes of work, these concepts are absent or incidental. Teaching programmes which are dominated by content provide few opportunities to pursue them. Generally, sixth form students have a more highly developed understanding of the global dimension, where they have more opportunities for debate and the expression of personal opinion.

110. In the minority of primary schools where the global dimension of geography was good, schemes of work highlighted local/global links and teachers encouraged pupils to reflect on their own values. Contexts for the work included football and fashion, development and aid, environmental issues in Antarctica and tropical rain forests and global energy.

111. Secondary schools generally do less well than primary schools in creating opportunities for studying the global dimension across the curriculum. In a few schools, the links to other subjects, most obviously citizenship, had been mapped and in these schools provision was better organised and developed. In one school, for example, very productive links had been made to modern languages.

This innovative and exciting cross-curricular bilingual project focuses on teaching geography through the medium of French. The curricular link being developed provides excellent opportunities for enriched learning and enjoyment as well as enhancing global citizenship and understanding through studies of topics linked to population and sustainability. In this case, pupils benefit from the opportunity to learn two disciplines and one language. Their concentration levels are noticeably enhanced as they strive to make sense of the French vocabulary and apply this to their previous learning in geography. Both subjects benefit in terms of the enthusiasm of the pupils and their desire to learn. They are not afraid to make mistakes and this often supports their learning as they rectify their errors. Pupils showed very good understanding of the geographical processes and started to develop a range of different vocabulary in French.

112. Some schools exploit well the potential of links with schools abroad. In some cases, the emphasis is on teachers' professional development, but links between pupils, for example as pen pals, can be very productive when well supported and sustained.

113. Schools that have attained the International School Award are often good at sustaining such links, seeing the potential benefits for learning geography.²⁶ For example, one school which had won the award had introduced a unit called 'passport to the world' in Year 7. This allowed pupils to research key features of different countries and make comparisons between them, so providing a very strong baseline for further work. In another school, the global dimension permeated many aspects of the school's work.

The range of topics studied includes relevant, global issues such as the sustainability of air travel which is considered in the follow up to a visit to Manchester airport. Pupils also consider topics such as fair trade and the sustainability of the 2012 Olympic site. The department played a central role in a 'World Geography Day' event linking the school with visitors from other countries. Year 7 pupils worked with visitors from different countries to find out about those countries and the people's way of life. This has led to developing initial links with a Ghanaian community. The subject is at the heart of the school's intermediate award for international status. The school curriculum was audited for the award and geography forms a significant proportion of the school's international curriculum.

114. In schools where the global dimension is prominent, pupils get below the surface of descriptive geography and begin to analyse issues such as the way in which places are seen through the media. Pupils found examples of places that were heavily stereotyped by the media and issues that were seen from only one side. This understanding, in turn, made them more critical users of the media.

115. Many schools, particularly denominational schools, sustain a culture of giving to charities. Such work provides obvious opportunities for studying the global dimension, but often it fails to do so and, when done in a misguided way, can reinforce unfortunate stereotypes. Schools which plan their charity work well and link it to the curriculum make good use of materials from non-governmental organisations such as the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development and Oxfam. Placing this work within the study of geography enables pupils to see the role of charities within a much wider frame: of human rights, justice, interdependence and sustainability. This is why good geography is so important.

'Our geography'. Royston High School, Barnsley and The City School, Sheffield: the global dimension

Over the last few years, students have travelled from Yorkshire to Lesotho, a landlocked country surrounded by South Africa, to take part in a development project. Both schools have mainly white pupils, some of whom are known to have intolerant views on issues such as race and migration. The visits provided the opportunity both to challenge these

²⁶ See also: *Evaluating internationalism in schools* (HMI 2683), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2683.

views and to make a contribution to educational improvement in the Malealea valley, by helping to improve the infrastructure there.

The students had their eyes opened to lives completely different from their own. During their stay pupils became involved in supporting a number of projects linked to the refurbishment of the primary and high school in Malealea as well as the school grounds. Many of the students who have attended construction courses in the United Kingdom were called upon to use their skills. Mortar was prepared and extensive patching, pointing and plastering was completed before painting was undertaken of the external walls and roof. Hundreds of trees were planted to contain soil erosion as well as to terrace the hillside to stabilise the soil.

The visit enabled students to reflect on the realities of life in the 21st century and made them question their own lives and their own values.

'As we entered the Plettenberg area we stumbled upon a black township. However, these townships were nothing like the ones we had witnessed in Cape Town. The Plettenberg Bay Township was far more developed than the ones in Cape Town. These contained running water, electricity and sewage systems. Also these houses were not made out of bits of wood and metal, they were real brick houses. As we approached the coast we entered a millionaire's paradise, with multimillion pound mansions as far as the eye could see and Lear jets flying overhead. It was hard to believe that these two different communities were so close, yet so far apart.'

'So close, yet so far apart': geography, well planned and well taught, will help all pupils to understand and value contrasting cultures and communities, both at home and abroad. The examples offered in this section show what is possible in widening pupils' horizons so that they understand the relevance of the global dimension to their own lives.

Notes

This report draws on evidence from Ofsted's school inspections from 2004 to 2005 and on specific surveys of geography conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) between 2004 and 2007 in primary and secondary schools. A minimum of 30 primary and 30 secondary schools were inspected each year during this period. Survey work in schools focused, in particular, on the impact of fieldwork on provision in geography, the monitoring of the pilot GCSE and teaching about the global dimension through geography. The report also refers to monitoring reports from the QCA, and research papers.

Further information

Publications

14–19 education and skills, White Paper (Cm 6476), HMSO, 2005; available from www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills/.

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Learning outside the classroom manifesto (DfES-04232-2006), DfES, 2006; available from www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials/outsideclassroom/.

Primary Geographer – published three times a year by the Geographical Association for all subscribing members. Non-members can purchase individual articles. www.geography.org.uk/loginjoin/primarygeographer

Teaching Geography – published three times a year by the Geographical Association for all subscribing members, aimed mainly at secondary teachers. Non-members can purchase individual articles. www.geography.org.uk/loginjoin/teachinggeography/.

Websites

Action Plan for Geography

www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

www.teachernet.gov.uk/learningoutsidetheclassroom

Eco-Schools

www.eco-schools.org.uk/whatis/index.htm

Geographical Association

www.geography.org.uk

QCA

[www.qca.org.uk/geography/innovating/
curriculum.qca.org.uk/curriculum-in-action/index.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/geography/innovating/curriculum.qca.org.uk/curriculum-in-action/index.aspx)

Royal Geographical Society and Institute of British Geographers

www.rgs.org

Sustainable schools

www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools/index.cfm